

Minutes from a Meeting of the Concordia Council on Student Life
Held on November 26, 2010
SGW H-769, 10 am

PRESENT: Ms. Elizabeth Morey (Chair), Ms. Lauren Broad (Secretary), Mr. Gerald Beasley, Dr. Catherine Bolton, Ms. Melanie Drew, Ms. Laura Gallo, Mr. Abdullah Husen, Mr. Ramy Khoriaty, Ms. Heather Lucas, Mr. Howard Magonet, Dr. Lata Narayanan, Ms. Holly Nazar, Ms. Tanya Poletti, Ms. Morgan Pudwell, Mr. Rodney Roberts (replacing Ms. Katherine Hedrich), Ms. Dale Robinson, Ms. Teresa Seminara, Mr. Adrien Severyns, Ms. Katie Sheahan, Ms. Laura Stanbra, Ms. Brigitte St-Laurent.

ABSENT WITH REGRETS: Ms. Anna Chigogidze, Mr. Daniel Houde, Ms. Lorraine Toscano.

ABSENT: Ms. Claudie Boujaklian, Ms. Johanne De Cubellis, Ms. Taylor Knott, Mr. Jacques Lachance, Ms. Rose Wangechi.

GUESTS: Mr. Hassan Abdullahi, Ms. Leanne Ashworth, Mr. Thomas Prince, Ms. Kristen Robillard, Ms. Jamie Robinson, Ms. Louise Shiller.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Chair called the meeting to order. The Chair noted that on the agenda under item 5 it should read 5.1 and 5.2 for the sub-items. The correction was made. The Chair pointed out that "Reports & Items of Information" would precede "Business Arising from the Minutes" on the agenda in order to accommodate to the guests that were attending the meeting.

Ms. Stanbra moved to approve the agenda. Mr. Magonet seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

2. REMARKS FROM THE CHAIR

The Chair welcomed Ms. Lucas, CSU President, as she will be replacing Mr. Ling on the Council as an undergraduate representative.

The Chair wished the students good luck in their upcoming exams and wished all members of Council a happy and safe holiday season.

The Multi-faith Chaplaincy, in partnership with the Dean of Students Office, will be holding the Holidays Around The World event in the Loyola Chapel on December 14, 2010 at noon. There will be information and displays on many of the various religious holidays and festivals from around the world, as well as food and entertainment. The Chair encouraged all to attend.

The Concordia Volunteer Abroad Program (CVAP) was recently awarded the YMCA Québec Peace Medal in the Youth category for its work in Uganda.

The university has recently launched the Spirit of Giving campaign, in collaboration with CTV and Alumni & Advancement Relations. They will set up collection boxes around campus for donations of non-perishable food items and new or relatively new toys.

The annual Tie-a-Ribbon-on-the-Tree event will be set up in the LB Atrium from December 6-10, 2010, where those interested may purchase a ribbon to decorate the tree. All proceeds will go to the Student Emergency Food Fund (SEFF). The Multi-faith Chaplaincy will be hosting an ornament making session on November 26, 2010 at noon in their SGW office located in the Z-Annex to make ornaments for the tree. All are welcome to attend.

All members of the Council have received an email invitation to the Dean of Students Holiday Celebration on December 17, 2010 from 1-4pm in H-637. There will be sweets and beverages provided to thank all those who contribute and get involved at the university.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF OCTOBER 22, 2010

Ms. Nazar requested that the minutes be corrected on page 4 to reflect that she had said "...that the understanding between the university and graduate students had been that no interest fees *or penalties* would be charged...". The minutes will be updated accordingly.

Ms. Nazar added that she would like to address some of what Mr. Bolla had said at the previous meeting. The Chair stated that this can be discussed under agenda item "Business Arising from the Minutes", and it was added as item 5.3 on the agenda.

Dr. Bolton moved to approve the minutes from the meeting of October 22, 2010 and Ms. Nazar seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

4. REPORTS AND ITEMS OF INFORMATION

4.1 Report from the Office of Rights and Responsibilities and the Ombuds Office

Ms. Kristen Robillard introduced herself as the Ombudsperson at Concordia and proceeded to provide the Council with information on the history of the Ombuds Office, its mandate, the services provided and problems they encounter from students. She distributed a pamphlet to the Council members that included information on the Ombuds Office. Ombudspersons are found in many areas, including universities, banks and the public sector. Concordia was one of the first universities in Canada to have an Ombudsperson, since the merger between the Loyola and the Sir George Williams campuses over 30 years ago, to assist people on campus with different problems, questions or concerns about university life. The mandate of the office is a broad one: to assist members of the community to resolve problems informally and to make recommendations about individual cases. Their main focus is that they are concerned that all members of the university are dealt with and deal with others fairly. The Ombuds Office wishes: to deal with people with courtesy and respect; to allow them to be heard and to receive a response in a timely manner; and also that they have the opportunity to reply to the response. Ms. Robillard explained that the Ombuds Office provides referrals, brainstorming and coaching to members of the Concordia community. It acts as a mediator in negotiating with various groups. The office also has the power to investigate a particular case further if the person has gone through the complaint process and still does not feel that they were treated fairly. The office has access to university documents necessary to carry out its function. Although the office does have the right to investigate, this does not happen often, and the Ombudsperson acts primarily as a consultant. All services provided by the Ombuds Office are confidential. Ms. Robillard noted that the office reports to the Board of Governors at the university, however it remains independent from the university.

Mr. Husen asked if the executive body of the university or even the President has any supervisory role over the Ombuds Office. Ms. Robillard replied no. The power of the office lies in the fact that it will give recommendations to the Board of Governors, however it does not have the authority to implement those recommendations. Individual case recommendations are often made, which do not necessarily go all the way to the Board of Governors.

Ms. Robillard reported that of approximately 40,000 students at Concordia, roughly 400 students (1% of the student body) consulted with the Ombuds Office last year. Students represent the largest group at the university who use the services provided by the office: two-thirds of the students are undergraduates and the rest are graduate students. The issues raised by students include, but are not limited to, tuition fees, quality of instruction, program/degree requirements, degree standing, advising and supervision, academic misconduct, reasonable accommodation and intellectual property. Ms. Robillard stressed the fact that the Ombuds Office does not necessarily advocate for the individual who came to them, but rather it will hear the issue informally, contemplate all sides of the situation and will advocate for fairness. The office is trying to be proactive in its approach by doing more prevention than in the past. The Ombudsperson attempts to provide students with ways to prevent problems before they arise, making them aware of their rights and their responsibilities as members of the Concordia community. Ms. Robillard encouraged all students to inform themselves of what is expected of them early on in their academic careers.

Ms. Louise Shiller introduced herself as an advisor from the Office of Rights & Responsibilities. She would provide an overview of the Code of Rights & Responsibilities, which was revised in August 2010, including some substantial changes such as updating the current provincial legislation into the code. Ms. Shiller proceeded with a Power Point presentation summarizing the Code and the office's role at the university.

The Council was given the opportunity to ask questions about either office. Ms. Nazar asked Ms. Robillard why she felt there were a disproportionate number of graduate students who visit the Ombuds Office. Ms. Robillard replied that many students had visited the Ombuds Office following the increase in fees for international students in the previous year. Typically, 20% of all students visits were attributed to graduate students, however the previous year had seen an increase to approximately 30%. Ms. Nazar asked if a fair assumption would be that 10% of graduate students who visited the Ombuds Office did so in response to the rise in international student fees, and Ms. Robillard agreed that this would be a fair estimate. Ms. Nazar highlighted the fact that the Ombuds Office changed their term of reference with regards to requesting information or documents from the university. She noted that the required response time from the university for such requests changed from "immediate" to "prompt". Ms. Nazar asked whether or not this change has made a difference in procedure of the office, and Ms. Robillard replied that no, it had not made a difference.

Ms. Sheahan noted that one suggestion in Ms. Shiller's presentation was for people involved in difficult situations to document their actions taken. Ms. Sheahan asked whose actions should be documented: our own reactions to an individual or the specific actions of the individual in question. Ms. Shiller responded that both should be well documented in case any future intervention was necessary.

The Chair said that it is very important for students to keep copies of every document and communication with members of the university, including email communication. Ms. Robillard added that students should be very careful of what documents they sign, noting that many people will sign a document without knowing what it contains.

4.2 HOJO Annual Report

Ms. St-Laurent introduced Ms. Leanne Ashworth, Interim Coordinator for HOJO, who has been asked to present the highlights of HOJO for 2009-2010, as well as the year-end financial statement. The Council had received via internal mail the report and financial statement prior to the meeting and Ms. Ashworth proceeded to summarize its contents. Ms. Ashworth noted on p.10 of the Annual Report the large increase in the number of total visitors, calls and emails for HOJO compared to previous years. She credited this increase to the new method of recording contact, and specifically recording contact through calls and emails. The survey results found on p.12-13, also found online, revealed three months of results and reflected quite positively on HOJO's delivery of relevant information, quality of service from staff and quality of written resources. Ms. Ashworth added that HOJO will continue to collect feedback and will also begin to send out automated emails to students so that they may respond to the survey at their convenience. Ms. Ashworth pointed out the charts on p.28-29, which show the sources of new visitors to HOJO, with 25% of first-time visitors coming from various other Concordia offices. She also noted that 48% of HOJO referrals are to other Concordia offices, specifically for employment.

The Chair recalled that every year CCSL provides funding to HOJO, which is why they provide a report to the Council members on an annual basis. Dr. Bolton asked how many people were working in the HOJO office and Ms. Ashworth replied that there were currently four part-time work-study positions held by students and one full-time coordinator position. Dr. Narayanan inquired as to how many students were surveyed and Ms. Ashworth confirmed that over three months, approximately 730 responses were collected, and that next year the numbers would surely increase as the time period surveyed would be a full 12 months. She also hoped for a higher response rate with the introduction of the automated survey. Mr. Severyns referred to the significant increase in services provided to students and wondered whether Ms. Ashworth felt that HOJO was or would become understaffed or underfunded. Ms. Ashworth replied that one of the challenges of their staff being work-study is that there is always a significant turnover in the office and that this would be a concern regardless of funding. Ms. Ashworth noted that this past year HOJO had started carefully tracking the increase in contact by phone and email and said that at this point, she did not anticipate any critical lack of resources. Ms. Stanbra asked for clarification whether phone and email contact were included in previous reports. Ms. Ashworth said that although phone and email contacts had been recorded, they had not previously been included in the report to CCSL. Ms. Stanbra thanked HOJO for the important services they provide to Concordia students.

Ms. Ashworth proceeded to table the financial year-end report and noted that the salary expenses from 2009-2010 were down by approximately \$10,000 from the previous year. This was due to a complete turnover of the part-time student staff, with four new employees as of October 2010, as well as herself as the Interim Coordinator as of August 2010. Ms. Ashworth thanked the Council members for their time.

5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

5.1 CCSL Special Projects Applicants Requesting Over \$5,000

A spreadsheet summarizing the CCSL Special Projects requests and results for the fall 2010 semester was circulated to the Council. Ms. Stanbra noted that the sub-committee had reviewed all applications requesting less than or equal to \$5,000 of funding. She reported that the Council would now be considering the three applications requesting over \$5,000. The applications and supporting documentation for each application had been circulated to the Council members prior to the meeting for review. Ms. Stanbra pointed out that there were 68 projects requesting \$5,000 or less, with 54 projects approved, to give an approval rate of 79%. This year, the fund has been pro-rated to account for the shortened 11 month fiscal year, therefore the total amount of the fund in 2010-2011 is \$150,150. The fund is usually \$165,000, with \$15,000 going to HOJO and \$5,000 earmarked for the CCSL approved Committee Participation Awards Program. The annual amount distributed to HOJO has also been pro-rated to \$13,650 for the reduced fiscal year. The balance remaining for distribution this year is \$131,500.

Ms. Stanbra summarized that \$174,137 was requested for projects under \$5,000, with a total of \$64,495 approved. After considering past trends, the sub-committee recommended that \$41,350 be earmarked for the winter 2011 semester applications. Although this amount may appear modest, a large number of applications received in the fall 2010 semester were for projects taking place in the winter. In the end, there would be \$25,655 remaining for the three fall projects requesting over \$5,000. The total amount requested from these projects was over \$45,000. Ms. Stanbra noted that the applicants would present their projects to the Council. She proposed that following the presentations, the Council would decide whether or not to support the project, followed by a discussion on how much to allocate to each. The Council agreed.

The following projects were presented with the requested funding amounts:

"Concordia Volunteer/Community Facility", presented by Ms. Jamie Robinson and Mr. Thomas Prince: requesting \$15,000.00

"Hive Café & Kitchen", presented by Mr. Hassan Abdullahi: requesting \$20,442.50

"An Evening With Elie Wiesel", presented by Mr. Adrien Severyns: requesting \$10,000.00

A brief question and answer period followed each presentation. Mr. Severyns was then asked to leave the room for the ensuing discussion, as he was the applicant for the project *"An Evening With Elie Wiesel"*.

Ms. Stanbra began the discussion, reminding the Council that the number of projects that typically apply in the winter semester will fluctuate from year to year, however many applications received for the fall 2010 deadline were for projects that will only take place in the winter 2011 semester. There is room for flexibility, however the Council wishes to be fair to those who apply in the next semester. Ms. Stanbra stated that funding allocated for several fall projects may become available, as some applicants do not claim the full amount approved, or do not claim the funding at all for various reasons. She also reported to the Council that there are currently two projects pending from the 2009-2010 year, namely the *"CSU Legal Information Clinic in Collaboration with the GSA"* and the *"GSA Advocacy Centre"*. Funds from the 2009-2010 CCSL Special Projects Fund were approved by CCSL to be carried over and held in trust for these projects, pending their progress. To date, these projects have not reported any progress to CCSL. Ms. Stanbra noted that the applicants would be asked to report to CCSL at the January 28, 2011 meeting. The Council members decided to move forward, considering the suggested amount available of \$25,655 for the three fall 2010 projects requesting over \$5,000.

The following motion was put forth by Ms. Stanbra, seconded by Mr. Husen:

To financially support the project "Concordia Volunteer/Community Facility", with an amount to be determined after further discussion.

A discussion ensued on whether the Council wished to support the “*Concordia Volunteer/Community Facility*” project. Some concerns raised were that the project does not affect many students relative to the amount of funding requested, that the facility will only be used by Concordia students for a few months per year and also that the funding would be used primarily to assist in repaying a major loan in a more timely fashion. Several members of the Council countered that more students will benefit from the project than is noted in the application, and that it is often difficult to determine with any certainty the true number of students affected by any given project. Several Council members noted that the initiative has been a great success in previous years and is very reflective of the strong humanitarian values of Concordia University.

The motion set forth by Ms. Stanbra, seconded by Mr. Husen, was put to a vote:

For: 10

Against: 3

Abstentions: 3

The motion was passed.

The following motion was put forth by Ms. Stanbra, seconded by Mr. Husen:

To financially support the project “Hive Café & Kitchen”, with an amount to be determined after further discussion.

A discussion ensued on whether the Council wished to support the “*Hive Café & Kitchen*” project. It was noted that the project had already established partnerships with several groups from the university, who not only wished to collaborate, but also whose success was dependent upon the realization of the project. Although most Council members appeared to support the project, many were concerned that it had received large amounts of funding in the past, yet the project had not been executed. The Council members wondered what would be different this time. Student representatives from the CSU assured other Council members that the CSU was committed to seeing the completion of this project and noted their certainty that the project would be a success. Feedback from students on campus was that they wanted more options for Loyola and that a huge number of students at Concordia would benefit from the project and its sustainable qualities.

The motion set forth by Ms. Stanbra, seconded by Mr. Husen, was put to a vote:

For: 15

Against: 0

Abstentions: 1

The motion was passed.

The following motion was put forth by Ms. Stanbra, seconded by Ms. Lucas:

To financially support the project “An Evening With Elie Wiesel”, with an amount to be determined after further discussion.

A discussion ensued on whether the Council wished to support the “*An Evening With Elie Wiesel*” project. A concern about the project included the fact that it has already happened, therefore what would happen if the applicant did not get the requested funding. Ms. Stanbra confirmed that many projects request funding retroactively, and Ms. Lucas noted that if the project were not approved for the full amount, it may have a negative effect on future speakers planned for the winter semester. It was asked whether there would be another request for funding to support the CSU Speaker Series in the winter semester, and Ms. Lucas believed that another request would be made. Several Council members felt that considering the size of the CSU Speaker Series, selective external sponsorship should not be excluded as a potential key source of revenue.

The motion set forth by Ms. Stanbra, seconded by Ms. Lucas, was put to a vote:

For: 14

Against: 1

Abstentions: 1

The motion was passed.

The Council began a discussion on how to allocate the \$25,655 of available funding between the three approved projects with a total requested amount of \$45,442.50. The Council contemplated several options, including dividing the funds equally between the groups or giving an equal percentage of the requested amount to each project, notably 56%, to exhaust the available funding. The suggestion was made that the “*Concordia Volunteer/Community Facility*” receives \$5,000 of funding since their budget reflects a required amount of \$5,000 to balance. The excess in requested funding would have simply allowed the project managers to repay the confirmed major loan faster than anticipated.

The following motion was put forth by Ms. Sheahan, seconded by Mr. Magonet:

That the “Concordia Volunteer/Community Facility” be approved for \$5,000 of funding from the CCSL Special Projects Fund.

For: 13

Against: 2

Abstentions: 1

The motion was passed.

The following motion was put forth by Ms. Sheahan, seconded by Ms. Drew:

*That the “Hive Café & Kitchen” and “An Evening With Elie Wiesel” projects be approved for 68% of each project’s requested amount of funding from the CCSL Special Projects Fund.**

**Note that the approved percentage at the November 26, 2010 meeting was 66%, however after further calculations, it was determined that to exhaust the remaining available funds, each project should receive 68% of their request amount of funding. This equates to \$13,900 for the “Hive Café & Kitchen” and \$6,800 for “An Evening With Elie Wiesel”.*

The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Stanbra wished to remind the Council members that the applicants for the two pending projects from 2009-2010 would be asked to report to CCSL at the January 28, 2011 meeting. Depending on their progress, this, along with the fact that some fall 2010 approved projects may not claim their entire funding, may result in more available funding for the winter 2011 semester.

5.2 Update on the Release of Graduate Student Transcripts

Following Ms. Nazar’s intervention at the October 22, 2010 CCSL meeting, the Chair contacted the Dean of Graduate Studies and a change has been made regarding under what circumstances the transcript of a graduate student with outstanding fees will be released. The following circumstance was added: to internal competitions and external funding agencies.

5.3 Discussion Regarding Presentation by Facilities Management

Ms. Nazar shared that she had several concerns regarding the information provided by Mr. Peter Bolla, Associate VP of Facilities Management, at the October 22, 2010 CCSL meeting. Ms. Nazar recalled that she had asked Mr. Bolla if there would be any exclusivity rights that would apply to the proposed Student Centre, and he had answered that none would apply. However, upon further investigation, Ms. Nazar found that this was not the case and that exclusivity rights would apply to the university portion of the proposed Student Centre, which is 1/3 of the centre. Secondly, Ms. Nazar had requested from Mr. Bolla copies of the agreements concerning the Student Centre following the meeting, however Mr. Bolla would not provide them to her. Mr. Severyns had in turn offered for Ms. Nazar to review the copies in the CSU office. Ms. Nazar added that a colleague of hers had requested these documents from both Mr. Bolla and the university, however he was also refused. Ms. Nazar wished that the university would be more forthcoming with their plans for the Student Centre. Her biggest concern was that when Mr. Bolla was asked if the site for the project had been confirmed, he had said no. Ms. Nazar felt that this information was misleading, since following the October 22, 2010 CCSL meeting, the past CSU President and others have confirmed that Le Faubourg was the chosen site for the project, and this information had not previously been disclosed for negotiation purposes. Ms. Nazar stated that she would have understood if Mr. Bolla had simply said that the site could not be discussed since no contract had been signed, however she felt that Mr. Bolla chose to withhold information.

Ms. Drew commented that she could understand why Ms. Nazar felt misled by the information provided by Mr. Bolla, however she could appreciate why Mr. Bolla had not disclosed the probable site to the Council, since this type of information is of a sensitive nature when no final agreement had been signed. Ms. Drew acknowledged that even as a Director, she is not always aware of every detail within her department when similar contractual issues are being discussed. Ms. Drew did not wish to dismiss Ms. Nazar's concerns, however she believed that the role of a member of CCSL was not to discuss real estate agreements or contracts, and that these issues were best left to be discussed by other boards or committees. Ms. Nazar replied that she could also appreciate Mr. Bolla's discretion, however the location of the proposed Student Centre is of crucial importance for student life at the university.

The Chair will contact Mr. Bolla to allow him to respond to the concerns raised by Ms. Nazar, and she will report back to the Council at the January 2011 CCSL meeting with his comments.

6. COMMUNICATION & AWARENESS RAISING OF THE STUDENT SERVICES SECTOR

The Chair reported that Mr. Terry Too, Associate Registrar, and IITS are collaborating on a project to assist students in difficulty, providing them with an online tool to direct them where to go with various issues they may have that contribute to them not completing their degree. The Chair proposed inviting Mr. Too to the January 28, 2011 CCSL meeting to provide the Council with a better understanding of the project. The Council agreed.

7. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Nazar asked that at the next meeting someone from Advancement & Alumni Relations speak to the fact that many graduate students are receiving promotional mail from institutions such as banks, stating that the mailing is in collaboration with the Alumni department. Ms. Nazar is concerned about personal information being released by the university. The Chair confirmed that if Ms. Wangechi were not able to attend the next CCSL meeting, someone from the department would be asked to respond.

Ms. Sheahan updated the Council that construction for Recreation & Athletics on the Loyola campus continued, with some major construction interventions taking place. There have been a number of staff that have been temporarily displaced. Temporary signage has been put in place to advise of this, and notice will be posted on the Recreation & Athletics website. The displacement will continue for a few months to allow for the existing complex to connect with the new PERFORM Centre. Ms. Sheahan asked that if any Council members received questions about the area, to please pass along the information to those inquiring.

Ms. Drew reported that Health Services would be coordinating a flu clinic in the lobby of the EV building. The flu vaccine will be free for any student, staff or faculty with a chronic condition. For all those who do not meet the criteria, they may pay approximately \$20 to receive the vaccine. The clinic will be held at the beginning of December, exact dates will be posted on the Health Services website.

8. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for January 28, 2011 at 10am in L-AD-210.

9. TERMINATION OF MEETING

Mr. Husen motioned to terminate the meeting. Ms. Stanbra seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.